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REMARKS, &c.

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A SERIOUS ADMONITION,

to the

DISCIPLES OF THOMAS PAINE,

and

ALL OTHER INFIDELS.

The astonishing Difference between those who have denied the Holy Scriptures and those who have *sincerely* believed them, *when called to die*, strikingly appears from the two following Instances, among many that might be produced.

MR. *Voltaire*, during a long Series of Years was continually treating the Holy Scriptures with Contempt, and endeavouring to propagate Infidelity. In his last illness, he sent for Dr. *Trenchin*: the Doctor found *Voltaire* in the greatest Agonies, exclaiming with the utmost Horror, *I am abandoned by God and Man.* *Voltaire* said, *Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth, if you will give me six Months' Life.* The Doctor answered, *Sir, you cannot live six Weeks.* *Voltaire* replied, *Then I shall go to Hell, and you will go with me.* Dr. *Trenchin* wished all who had imbibed the Tenets of this unhappy Man, could have been present at his last Scene, as it might have been productive of the best Effects.

N. B. This is the Hero of *T. Paine* and modern Infidels!!!

THE Rev. Mr. *Romains* was a zealous and successful Preacher of the Gospel of JESUS, and adorned it by a suitable Character, above fifty Years. In his last illness, though sensible it was for Death, there was that sweet Reliance upon the Promise and Truth of God, which he so often inculcated: Hence arose that remarkable Patience, that not one fretful or murmuring Word ever escaped his Lips. The following were some of his dying Expressions; *I have the Peace of God in my Conscience, and the Love of God in my Heart, and that is sound Experience. I knew before the Deistries I preached to be truths, but now I experience them to be blessings. JESUS is more precious than Rubies, and all that can be desired on Earth, is not to be compared to Him.* He told a Friend, *he had come to see a saved Sinner*: This he had often affirmed should be his dying Boast, and that he desired to die with the Language of the Publican on his Lips, "God be merciful to me a Sinner." The Friends who were with him had no doubt but his last Hour was the happiest Hour of his Life. He was in full Possession of his mental Powers to the last Moment; and near his Dissolution he cried out, *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Glory be to thee on High, for such Peace on Earth, and Good-will to Men.*—After this he continued in Prayer and Praise till his Breath was exhausted, and he fell asleep in Jesus. Thus, *The wicked is driven away in his Wickedness, but the righteous hath Hope in his Death.* Prov. xiv. 32.

Reader, be not cheated out of thy Soul and eternal Happiness, by the Publications which are sent abroad to blaspheme the Bible.—Infidels and ungodly Men lose their Courage when Death and Judgment stare them in the Face. The Holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto Salvation through Faith in Christ Jesus. Not only assent to them as the Truth of God, but pray to experience their powerful Efficacy through the Spirit on thy Heart; that thou mayest live the Life and die the Death of the righteous.

O may the heavenly Pages be,
My ever dear Delight,
And still new Beauties may I see,
And still increasing Light.

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
Be thou for ever near;
Teach me to love thy sacred Word,
And view my Saviour there.



REMARKS

ON

A PUBLICATION,

ENTITLED,

“A SERIOUS ADMONITION

to the

DISCIPLES OF THOMAS PAINE,

and

ALL OTHER INFIDELS”.

BY ABRAHAM BINNS.

For the invisible things of him (viz. God) from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being
underwood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they (the
Gentiles) are without excuse.

Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.—PAUL.

STOCKPORT;

PRINTED, FOR THE AUTHOR, BY J. CLARKE.

1796.

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REMARKS, &c.

IT is the duty of every man, but especially of him who writes on polemical subjects, to treat those sentiments or opinions, which he considers as errors, with generosity, candour, and due respect. Men of every religious persuasion distinguished by a name, though subject to the most marked reproach of popular disapprobation, have an indubitable claim upon the man, who declares himself their antagonist, for common civility, truth, and justice: it is agreeable to scripture, and corroborated by the sacred and immutable laws of nature; and, however opposite the opinions of men may be, the obligation is reciprocal, without any exception. If, therefore, the advocate for any particular system should observe, with jealous eye, the propagation of sentiments, that, in his estimation, are likely to endanger the security of his own; should he conceive himself called upon to use his best argumentative exertions to stop the

growing heresy, and promote the best of causes, impartial truth, the nature and excellency of the undertaking, as well as the object, demand a candid and impartial trial: but, should he make use of intemperate language; should he have nothing better to support his cause than scurrilous personalities, common sense would say it was the effervescence of weakness, the language of defeat. Where personalities must supply the place of argument, it is a convincing proof, that either the system so defended is erroneous, or, if founded upon principles of moral equity, that they are not sufficiently understood. Truth never voluntarily retreats to a dishonourable subterfuge for protection; she seeks not her refuge in the virtues of Romaine, neither does she triumph in the vices of Voltaire. Independent of men of principles and profession, she remains the same, immutable as her eternal source. Had the monitor sufficiently considered this point, the dead might have reposed in peace, and deliberate investigation have supplied the place of invidious comparison.

A publication, of only one quarto page, containing a title, a preface, a biographical sketch of two eminently distinguished characters, designed as an "Admonition to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and all other Infidels", an exhortation to the reader, and two verses of an hymn, it may be construed,

that such a variety, in so small a compass, must certainly be replete with error of the most dangerous tendency to merit a reply. As an individual, I shall give my opinion, and leave the public to determine for themselves; induced by a hope, that the author will, at a future period, resume the subject on a more liberal and equitable plan.

It is evident, that by infidelity, the author means deism, it being addressed to the disciples of that celebrated deist, T. Paine. Voltaire "is the Hero of *T. Paine* and modern Infidels!!!" Surely, Sir, you had no need to annex three notes of admiration; the falsehood is sufficiently notorious without them. Are there not thousands of deists, who are entire strangers to the writings and sentiments of Voltaire? Is it not highly probable, that there are more infidels, who are perfectly unacquainted with Voltaire's works, than there are of a contrary class? It is contrary to the established order of things to suppose, that a man, triumphing in his own sentiments, should echo the fame of a tutor he was totally ignorant of. It requires no uncommon degree of sagacity to discover the design of the author, in making such an unqualified assertion, which is equally as fatal to his own scheme of theology, as it is false of those to whom it is directed.

The monitor is not content with making Voltaire the father, or hero of infidelity; if we attend to

the preface, we shall find that he (Voltaire) is made the federal head, or representative of that obnoxious sect. The preface will fully explain the author's design: "The astonishing Difference between those who have denied the Holy Scriptures and those who have *sincerely* believed them, *when called to die*, strikingly appears from the two following instances, among many that might be produced". The trifling, threadbare story of Voltaire, in his last illness, is then introduced, with a triumph, which does no great honour either to the head, or heart of the relater; and, if true, shews the mind of Voltaire to have been deranged at the time. But, is it any thing uncommon, that a man, who has lived a profligate life, should be stung with remorse upon the approach of death? If Voltaire "treated the Holy Scriptures with Contempt"; or the koran of Mahomet with contempt; or whatever any nation, or society, or individual held sacred, in the same manner; pray, sir, what need of astonishment, if sober reflection, the natural concomitant of severe indisposition, should so operate on his feelings, and alarm his fears, as to bring him to pass an unqualified sentence upon himself? Why single out a solitary individual, for the avowed purpose of calumniating every man, who embraces similar sentiments? But, had you adduced ten thousand characters, more deeply plunged

in guilt than the former, for the same purpose, they could not all have brought you one step nearer the accomplishment of your object.

Being an entire stranger to the works and character of Voltaire, any farther than the above hackneyed account of his death, which I have seen in different publications, the author may be entitled to some share of credit for what he has related of that "unhappy Man". And what then? is personal guilt transferrable, the same as personal property? If Voltaire, as a deist, or an infidel, was a bad man, does it follow, as an unavoidable consequence, that every man, who denies the divine authenticity of the scriptures, must necessarily be equally bad in his life, and unhappy in his death? Our author has already answered in the affirmative: "The astonishing Difference between those who have denied the Holy Scriptures, and those who have *sincerely* believed them", is delineated in the person of *Voltaire* on the one hand, and in that of *Romaine* on the other, without making any exception for the great numbers who have coincided with them in *sentiment*, but have been the reverse of either the one, or the other, in their moral deportment.

No wonder the monitor was astonished at his own conclusion; its liberality knows no bounds; it extends to the vilest of the vile, of the christian

name. Come forward, ye systematized christian butchers; ye national assassins; ye infatuated crusaders; ye, who make the christian religion a cloak for the basest of crimes, and, under the sanction, and in the defence of the *gospel of peace*, turn the earth into an aceldama, and view, with reverence and with gratitude, the apology of your crimes. Romaine believed the scriptures, he died in peace; ye fight for them, and shall not your end be like his? As a Mr. P——d elegantly expressed himself, in a pulpit not twenty miles from Stockport, "Tag-rag and Bob-tail, away with you all to heaven"! Go on, ye monsters in human form, rioting in iniquity; bid defiance to the sacred laws of nature; treat the remonstrances of your own conscience as ye would the idle nonsense of a fairy tale; swear, with an enthusiast's zeal, that ye "*sincerely believe the Holy Scriptures*", and, if you believe our author too, you may, perhaps, cheat God out of justice, and find a way to heaven consistent with, and agreeable to, the immorality of your lives.

Is it not strange and unaccountable, that, in the present very advanced period of society, the monitor should think so little of its improvement in theological science? If the vices of Voltaire, and the virtues of Romaine, are not transferrable; if the deistical tenets of the former, do not neces-

fairly and unavoidably chain their advocates to the slavery of their worst passions; or, if the orthodox tenets of the latter, do not as necessarily and unavoidably free their advocates from the dominion of vice; the intent of the comparison, as defined by the preface, in my opinion, proves nothing, except it be the mortification of the author at the progress of opinions, which, from motives best known to himself, he has not thought proper fairly and openly to attack.

It was an observation of one of the ancient philosophers, that, "time, which destroys the illusions of opinion, would ultimately establish the grand decisions of nature". The present age is the age of reason; and if reason and moral philosophy are at variance with revelation, either the one or the other must be wrong. But, if God be immutable, his word and his works, if rightly understood, must perfectly coincide in their moral instructions: there can be no jar, no contradiction in that, which proceeds immediately from the fountain of truth and purity; and to assert the contrary, would be to deny the very existence of a Supreme Being; or, what is strictly the same, to deny every idea that we can form of his moral excellency. But, however men may differ in their opinions concerning truth, or the supreme good, one thing we may be assured of, that,

"truth", however slow in its operation, "is mighty, and will prevail". And if the holy scriptures are truth, without any mixture of error, and the knowledge derived from the laws of nature and the moral government of God, as discovered in all the works of creation, be delusion and falsehood, would it not have been more pertinent to the point to have arranged them in regular order, and exposed their fallacy by shewing their dangerous tendency, than indulged yourself in an attempt to frighten the degraded infidels, by exhibiting the vices of an individual, just as an ignorant and silly nurse would frighten a naughty child into obedience by telling it of a bugbear, which had no existence but in the folly of the former, and in the imagination of the latter? Riper age detects the fallacy, and laughs at the cheat; and our author is rather too late with such *serious* trifling, to make any *serious* impression on the minds of those infidels, who are rationally enquiring after truth.

Humanity recoils at the idea of raking up the ashes of those, who, consigned to the silent mansions of the dead, are incapable of self-defence. The ground which the monitor has taken to defend christianity, and calumniate infidelity, not only betrays the worst of passions, but operates with equal force against every systematized profession of religion whatever. Were we to try the excellence

of the christian religion by the lives of its professors in general, would it not appear more like the word of a demon, than the word of God? To pass over in silence the unnatural animosities of different sects concerning the true meaning of the scriptures; the monkish superstition, pharisaical pride, and cruel piety on the one hand, the licentious and dissipated lives of its advocates on the other, are, in my opinion, sufficient proof that the most sublime doctrines, the plainest and purest precepts may be either mistaken, or otherwise perverted to the worst of purposes. The religion of the New Testament undoubtedly breathes peace, goodwill, and universal philanthropy: but the history of the christian church is brutality out-brutalized; a refinement in every species of cruelty, enough to shock the feelings of an untaught barbarian.

The dreadful calamities inflicted by one party of christians, strutting in the sunshine of court favor, and aided by the secular arm against another, whose sentiments were obnoxious to their caprice, or unfavorable to their interests; the burnings in Smithfield; the cold-blooded butcheries in many parts of the East-Indies, and few parts of the world, however secluded, but have smarted beneath the rod of christian barbarity, for the avowed purpose of conquest, and making christian proselytes; for, these odious cruelties have made the name of christian

an abhorrence to that people, whose religion is deduced only from the volume of nature. Mark the ignorance and sottish bestiality of christians at home; trace the cruelties perpetrated abroad by the more enlightened and refined; and are they not criterion to judge of the excellency of the christian religion in the same manner, and with equal propriety, as our author's account of the life of Voltaire is a criterion whereby to judge of the baseness of deism, or infidelity? Each of them are alike absurd and ridiculous. And when the truth of any theological system can only be supported at the expence of another, which may be equally true, but does not exactly coincide in every particular, and either the one or the other must fall, it is just and equitable that both should fall together.

To urge a variety of arguments, for the purpose of detecting the impropriety of the author's method of reasoning, would be useless, as in a great measure it detects itself: an ingenuous mind must feel indignant at every attempt to prove the good or bad tendency of any theoretical opinions; from the morality or immorality either of their champions or private professors. If the conduct of men be the only rule for the trial of what is morally excellent, reason and revelation may retire to the shades of oblivion, and caprice and mechanical impulse be the grand standard of divine truth.

The author's exhortation to his readers is very concise, (not quite six lines), but replete, in some parts, with insult to their understandings. We are first seriously admonished not to be cheated out of our soul and eternal happiness, by the publications which are gone abroad to blaspheme the Bible. He ought to have pointed out, distinctly, which they were, lest we should have mistaken them. The christians have not infrequently accused each other of publishing doctrines or sentiments extremely pernicious to good morals. The fulminated anathemas, the virulent spleen of personal invective, enough to have *disgraced* a Billingsgate orator, has *graced* the works of polemical divines, not, I believe, with a design to "cheat people out of their Souls and eternal Happiness", but to make proselytes to their party; each paying himself the compliment of understanding the scriptures best, and denying to others the right of using their own reason, while every one, in his turn, could claim the liberty of abusing his own. Those who are acquainted, in a small degree, with controversial writings, must allow, that they have treated each other, and the Bible too, much worse than Mr. Paine has treated the Bible, or any of them, in that obnoxious work, "The Age of Reason". It is rather curious that Voltaire, and Mr. Paine, should have called forth the indignation

of our author, in so singular a manner; and yet, if his readers may be allowed to judge for themselves, I, for one, should think, that the very works we are admonished to guard against, are those of the christian profession, and his own production is one amongst the rest.

We are further informed, that, "the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto Salvation through Faith in Christ Jesus". This part of the exhortation would not have been noticed, had it not been for the middle clause of the following period, which appears to me extremely inconsistent with the above quotation.

Those who have read the scriptures attentively, and have their minds at liberty to judge impartially, must, I think, agree with our author's assertion, that, "they are able to make us wise unto Salvation". Take this quotation with John, chap. vi. ver. 63. 'the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life'; and the validity of the New Testament will be established on the solid basis of its own internal excellence. It requires not to be guarded by the flaming sword of penal statutes; neither is it so ambiguous and mysterious as to require a revelation from God, either to explain its meaning, or give effect to its moral instruction. Every real christian would unite in condemning the former, and Jesus has wisely guarded against the latter.

Variety of opinions, upon any subject, is generally attended with some good effect. Without controversy, many useful truths would be enveloped in the gloomy shades of mystery and uncertainty. The Author of nature never designed that truth should be intuitively discovered: it would have frustrated the grand object of infinite wisdom and benevolence, by depriving man of the felicity of learning. How unreasonable then is the following quoted passage from the exhortation before us; "Not only assent to them (the Scriptures) as the truth of God"—if we except "Not only", which is merely an emphasis on the latter part of the period, the meaning will be clearly understood; "assent, &c." Could the admonition be reduced to practice, as readily as given, it would make us believers in a moment, without the happiness of knowing any thing either of the object or the evidence of our faith. Such exhortations are rather hurtful than useful, except duly supported by cogent reasoning, to convince the reader of their propriety. Besides, to solicit a man's "assent", merely on our own credit, obliquely accuses of falsehood what we would recommend as truth.

I would ask the monitor, why he prefers the christian scriptures to the koran of Mahomet? and whatever answer he gives, that shall be his criterion to judge of the parts that compose the whole of the Bible. If we must believe the scrip-

tures, from Genesis to Revelation, to be the express word of God, they must perfectly coincide with the ideas we form of their Author, who is infinite in all his perfections, and the centre of moral excellence. But, why must we implicitly give our assent to the validity of scripture? Is the word of God self-evident? Is its meaning too obvious to be mistaken? Why, then, do not all christians perfectly agree as to its real import? Or, is the truth of the scriptures different, in its own nature, from any other scientific truth? If not, it requires investigation, by some rule or other, to discover it. But, to urge our assent to the scriptures, "as the Truth of God", without previously attempting, at least, to convince us that they are true, is a tacit insinuation that rigid scrutiny and scripture, are most agreeable at a distance.

Would the author have done justice to the system he has espoused, he ought to have recommended our utmost diligence in duly examining all its parts, trusting to the inference that might be drawn from the evidence it produced. Surely he will not expect his readers to assent to, or believe any scientific proposition, without what may appear to them a full, clear, and satisfactory evidence: and this once adduced, deprives us of even the power of choice; for it does not, cringing and fawning, solicit our "assent", its demands are positive, its power omnipotent. It is happy for

man; that he cannot believe upon the bare authority of exhortation, however well supported by mere assertions; neither can he withhold his assent on clear conviction: were it possible it could be otherwise, civilized society would cease to exist, depredations would be committed with impunity, and virtue and vice have no distinction. Hence the necessity of using every rational argument to convince your readers, that the scriptures are of divine origin, and if successful in convincing, the accomplishment of your desire necessarily crowns your labor.

The Romanists have interdicted the use of the scriptures to the laity, under the idea that they were not capable of understanding them; and if we are yet considered in a state only fit to follow persuasion merely on the credit of an author, the only difference will be, that the former, with unblushing front, impeached the understandings of the people openly; and the latter, as if conscientiously impressed with shame, has recourse to an artifice, which effectually dupes into ignorance, and when detected, appears in the garb of innocence.

That part of the period before alluded to, is, in my opinion, a keen satire on the Bible, and evidently contradicts the author's assertion in the preceding part of his exhortation*. "But pray to experience their powerful Efficacy through the

* See page 12.

Spirit on thy Heart", &c. We may enquire of ourselves, without incurring the charge of being impertinent, whether the scriptures are capable of answering any valuable purpose, abstractedly considered, or without the assistance of supernatural operation? If they are, can we conceive of any design of higher importance than that of "making us wise unto Salvation"? &c. If this be granted, the inference is obvious, that the scriptures are able to answer every purpose that infinite wisdom designed, or moral justice could demand of man, consistently with his free agency, and the collateral circumstances of his being. But the enquiry still resumes its course, Why ought I to pray to experience the efficacy of that, which plainly and positively is declared to be efficacious? To reconcile the difficulty requires time and talents not frequently possessed by men employed in the common occupations of life.

But the difficulty still increases: the scriptures, which are allowed to be efficacious at one time, are, at another, to be efficacious by means of prayer, and that efficacy to be conveyed to the mind of the petitioner through a medium called the spirit!!! Is this divinity proper to be held forth to men of common capacities, the generality of whom are deprived of the means of mental improvement, either through necessitous drudgery, or pampered affluence? It may be conducive to the interests of

those, who riot in luxury, on the bounteous income of spiritual traffic; but how it must make man wiser with wisdom worth his knowing, or a more worthy member of civil society, is a mystery*, which, I think, no man but an idiot would attempt to explain.

* Mystery! sacred, important mystery! invented by priests, supported by the secular arm for the mutual advantage of both, constituting one common interest! dreadful alliance! formidable combination against useful knowledge, virtue, rational liberty, and happiness! source of perpetual discord, and the only visible mark of any curse that afflicts the earth! the beast of assumed power and the false prophet of national religion united! These form the ground of the diabolical craft: let us for a moment contemplate its consequences.

Whatever advantages may have been the result of public preaching, they have been, and are now, more than counterbalanced by means of hierarchical establishments, and committing the reins of moral government to hirelings, whose interest and profession are as much opposed to each other, as the sublimest virtues to the foulest crimes. Religion! what is it, but a species of sacred gambling? every party assiduous (if facts may speak for themselves) to convert men from one course of vice to another. If this is not the case, why do the partizans of their peculiar creeds, celebrated perhaps for their piety, turn rebels against the Majesty of heaven, usurp the throne of judgement, and consign to eternal death, from the pulpit as well as in private, their more excellent neighbour, because he differs from them in sentiment? That charity, which is the bond of perfectness, restricted to the narrow limits of a name; man, the offspring of the Universal Parent of good, refusing to his fellow man, to his brother, a social and friendly interchange of thought, for no other crime but

But, if the scriptures are inefficacious without so many means, mediums, concurrences, operations, &c. &c. is it not really dishonorable to God

that of which he himself is guilty. Government, at the instigation of court chaplains, depriving man of his liberty; denying him his right as a citizen; persecuting and harassing the innocent for not subscribing to what he cannot comprehend, or for not prostituting the integrity of his heart to the servile idolatry of opulence and influence. Fourteen times in the year, according to the rubric of the church of England, is the priest to sentence his congregation to hell, if they will not believe, what infinite wisdom cannot comprehend. The creed begins with damnation; its contents are double-distilled mystery, and ends with the following most awefully sublime climax: "This is the Catholick Faith: which except a man believe *faithfully*, he cannot be saved. Glory be to the Father", &c. For what? for the hierarchy outwitting their own wisdom, and levelling the poignant shafts of their anathemas directly at their own heads, as well as at the heads of others?

Jesus Christ, from the operations of nature, shows the impiety of partial charity, Matt. chap. v. ver. 43—48. but such allusions are deistical, and too plain for the complex theology of the times. Were all men moral philosophers, the wide extreme of opinion would still exist; but animosities, discord, pious censure, religious slander, would die away of themselves, in spite of the utmost exertions of the hireling teacher, whose ease and affluence depend on keeping them alive. Thanks to the constitution and to the government of the country, with all their defects, for restraining the anti-christian spirit of cruelty from persecuting to death the obnoxious heretics and infidels of the age.

The relics of superstition are not the only evils that oppose the progress of moral reformation; her most formidable enemies are those of her own house: ambitious of ranking

to ascribe to him a work destitute of the common properties of all other publications? All other books of science are received or rejected, upon the

with the advocates of freedom's glorious cause, many repair to her standard; thoughtless of the sacrifice her discipline requires; charmed with the melodious accents of a name, precipitately commence flaming patriots, and loudly declaim against political abuses. Mistaken men! triumphing in newly-acquired sentiments of religion and virtue, you forget the respect which you owe to others: men, principles, and profession, confounded without distinction, your clamour is excited against them all. You have read Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason", and conclude that, a sufficient apology for treating the Bible as a cunningly-devised fable, as mere fiction and delusion. Tired with the galling yoke of moral obligation, you throw off all restraint, and boldly rush into the wilds of eccentricity, where corrupt inclination may range without control. You have declared yourselves to be independent, and set up to be your own priest, (which every man ought to do), but you are exceedingly premature, if not grossly ignorant; you either mistake or pervert the first axioms of moral science: it is better to enquire the law at the priest's mouth, and to walk by his directions, though monkish and superstitious, than give up the reins of government to the gratification of unruly passion, and worse than beastly appetite. You plume yourselves upon your zealous attachment to truth and freedom, while apparently you take pleasure in the worst kind of slavery, The alehouse is become your church, and your religion is to glory in your own shame. Patriotism blushes to own such a preposterous offspring: the Bible, that you so lightly esteem, censures your loose and dissolute course of life in apposite and sympathizing language: the works of nature, from earth to heaven, in all her various operations; the reflections of your own heart, these principles of deism, in which you glory, re-

internal evidence they bear to the truth or the fallacy of what they contain. Systems of science, historical narrations, or moral and prudential maxims,

monstrate with you, from every quarter, against your injustice, perversion, and abuse of a character, to which you have no just claim. FREEDOM never approaches the unhallowed haunts of fots and profligates, because she delights in the tranquil walks of science, of friendship, and virtuous accomplishments. As profound politicians, you can flourish on the theory of rational equality, of equal representation; and can paint the expressive features, in the most lively colours, of what government ought to be. But what must form a constitution for such a government, and give permanent security to its operations? Answer, ye pot-house politicians; or, till then, I will venture to offer my opinion: individual reformation, a regard to moral justice, to relative and social duties. Information and virtuous habits are inseparably connected with the reformation both of church and state. Mr. P— and the cabinet are friends to a parliamentary reform, compared with characters whose lives are a libel on the cause they have espoused; and, whatever may be their motives, actually commence hostilities against their own profession: they justify, in some measure, tyrannical and unconstitutional proceedings on the part of government, and invite the illiberal and invidious declamations of prostituted hirelings and their tools, against principles and opinions, that ought to be directed against licentiousness of character.

Whoever the reader may be, that is conscious he is a character of the above description, (that there are such, is certain, and I sincerely hope there are not many), I ask not his pardon for addressing him thus freely on a subject of the highest importance. The deist, the patriot, who will not refrain from frequenting ale-houses, those common sewers of iniquity, those parents of revolutionary violence, afford, at least, a presump-

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we never hesitate, after due examination, to pronounce true or false, independently of their author; and their utility or inutility rests entirely on the merit or demerit of the work, without any other aid than the exertions of our mental powers. If, then, the scriptures either cannot be understood, or, if understood, can produce no salutary effect but by the co-operation of their author, the word of God, and the repeated operations of God, are a perpetual libel on each other's inefficacy, just as if any author should publish a book, suppose of moral and philosophical tracts, in such a manner that the reader could not understand so as to be benefited by the work, except while the author was present to give it effect. Such an insipid writer, (God only excepted), no one would think entitled to much esteem for his labor, nor his book to one word of controversy on its merits: as it related to instruction, it would be a non-entity. Whether the scriptures, and their author, on the popular orthodox scheme, and particularly of the monitor before us, be parallel with the comparison,

tive proof, that they are practical friends to those abuses in religion and politics, which the theory of their system, if rightly understood, severely reprehends. It ought to be impressed on the hearts of all, but especially of the man, whose opinions subject him to popular indignation, that a conduct directly opposed to the principles he professes, wounds the profession with more effect, than the envenomed darts of all its openly avowed enemies.

let the reader determine. If I may hazard an opinion, Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason", compared with such sentiments, might be entitled *A Defence of Christianity: sentiments*, that strip the Bible of every excellency, and then supply the defect by a farrago of creeds, and obscure, pretended explications, that do the cause of christianity a greater disservice, than it has merited from its worst enemies.

The monitor, by confounding infidelity with deism, has thrown an odium upon that sect, which does not properly apply to them as a sect, any more than it applies to any of the christian sects: besides, he uniformly associates with the idea of deism, those qualities that constitute a wicked character. "Infidels", says he, "and ungodly Men lose their Courage when Death and Judgment stare them in the Face". His meaning is plain, but the proposition is not strictly true. A circumstance recently happened in Stockport, which, if there was no other, is sufficient to confute such a very illiberal conclusion: but the assertion confutes itself; for had it been invariably the case, deistical tenets, like a suicide, must ere now, from the nature of things, have been their own executioner, and consequently, have "cheated" the monitor out of the opportunity of vindicating the scriptures as the truth of God, at the wicked expence of consigning to eternal destruction all "those who have

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denied them". Were they supported by no better evidence than the keen remorse of reflection, and dreadful apprehensions of bad men, at their last moments, the fate of "the Truth of God", by its own professors, would long since have been irrevocably determined, and "the Disciples of Thomas Paine", and our christian "Hero", granting him his own terms, would exactly meet on equal ground.

But, the truth of the christian religion does not depend either on Voltaire, Mr. Paine, or any of their disciples; it has a more stable and permanent foundation than either the good or bad morals, the orthodox or heterodox sentiments of any man, or number of men, of any persuasion whatever; its validity, as a revelation from God, rests entirely on the moral attributes of its author, as they are discovered in the order, the variety, the harmony, the beauties, the utility, and inviolable laws of creation, immutable as the first cause from whom they proceeded: and from this source of divine truth, the moral government of creation, (the source likewise of the principles of true deism) we discriminate between the reveries, the delusions, the revelations, communications, idle dreams, uninteresting tales of impostors and visionary enthusiasts; and that theology, which is the moral philosophy of nature, condensed and rendered plain to the meanest capacity, so that the poor laboring man, who can read, may accurately know his

personal, his relative, and social duties, and rejoice in hope of a future felicity, on the well-grounded assurance of indubitable fact, as well as the man, who deduces from philosophical science exactly corresponding duties and doctrines.

The laws of nature, taken in their most comprehensive view, and the sensations of pleasure and pain inseparable from animate being, are the only test for the trial of any moral truth: and those parts of the scriptures, which, when candidly examined, do not correspond with reason and the connexion of things, by a due reference to the first cause, ought to be refused the appellation of the truth of God, for the very same reasons that we reject the koran of Mahomet, the prophecies of Mr. Brothers, &c. Those advocates of revelation who are determined to palm every sentence upon us as worthy of God, are in fact joining issue with Mr. Paine in theology, as Mr. P— has joined him in politics. Extremes on either side the strict line of truth, are generally productive of similar effects: for, admitting two men should start from any given point, the one directly east, and the other directly west, pursuing their journey through the wide of extreme, both would meet together at last.

The gospel of Christ is replete with doctrines calculated to cherish our hopes, to dispel our fears, to refine our feelings, and to engage our affections; its precepts, like self-evident truths, challenge our

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assent from the highest authority: they are worthy
a divine messenger to deliver. The voice of nature,

On every hill, through every vale,

The wide expanse around,

The opening flowers, the warbling tribe,

Reverberate the sound.

But what is the excellency of this religion, when detached from scientific pursuits? Must facts speak for themselves, it is not the sublime doctrines, the pure and dignified precepts, the natural and unaffected exemplifications of Jesus; it is a crude mass of indigestible contradictions; an heterogeneous compound of mysteries, importances, spiritual rights, spiritual wrongs, denunciations, exclusions, discords, well-meant enthusiasm, and confusion that confounds, from the mitred prelate to the parish priest. Philosophical science, separated from christianity, is liable to extremes, though of a more harmless nature; doubts and fears on important doctrines, stoical pride, apathy, cold indifference, scepticism, &c. The man, who lightly esteems the voice of his Maker in the stupendous and magnificent works of his infinite goodness, and he, who lightly esteems the gospel of Christ because of a few historical inaccuracies, may hail each other on their glorious eccentricities, and unite in the friendship of their follies.

The religion of the New Testament, and natural science, are not at variance, but as they are made

so, either through our ignorance or our selfishness. Erroneous opinion is a never-failing spring of sacerdotal and political profit; and rational information is equally fatal to both: hence the dread among certain descriptions of men, lest the above sources of knowledge should unite their streams; yet when this happy union takes place, their good effects are numberless: they operate as a salutary check to our bold aspirings and unnecessary fears; they elucidate and mutually confirm each other's instructions; they tranquillise the mind; they are fountains of permanent and sublime pleasure that never satiate; they remove the curse, turn earth into paradise, and raise all ranks in society to the true dignity of man.

Not having the pleasure of knowing any thing of the monitor, only from information, and understanding that he fills an important and respectable office as a public instructor, I hope he will excuse the importunity of an inferior, in the private walks of life, soliciting his attention, with others of the same profession, to a subject of the highest importance; its importance heightened by personal aspersions, and illiberal invective. The pens of the most accomplished characters have been industriously employed on far less useful subjects, and many of that description have warmly espoused one side of the question at present in dispute. They who have used their best exertions will not

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think themselves insulted, if the subject should yet be considered as open to farther discussion: and if the still increasing extreme between the moral instructions of nature's laws, the express image of nature's God, and the moral instructions of Jesus Christ, can be proved to harmonize, such a desirable object must certainly rank with the foremost of theological acquisitions.

You, therefore, of the clerical profession, whose liberal education, whose abilities and exalted stations raise you above the common level of society, and give you a preponderating influence in the direction of the public opinion; will you still defeat your own design, and give the ensign of triumph to your opponents, by bringing forward the heavy artillery of the Vatican, to play upon the devoted head of a solitary individual? It is not Mr. Paine's ignorance, or his buffoonery, his vanity, his vileness, his raillery, or blasphemy, or any other foul epithet that may be conjured up and applied to that person, or any other, which can form any part of what is necessary to discover the truth: they may please some, and disgust others, but they will not convince where argument is required. Mr. Paine, as an author, is entitled to respect equally with most of his opponents: and the point at issue, if I understand the subject right, is, whether the scriptures are the word of God; and as such, the only ground of

moral truth, the source of moral obligation, and the only true theology? Or, whether the necessary connection and fitness of things, as constituted in the works of creation, are the only ground of moral truth, the source of moral obligation, and the only true theology? Or, whether the theology of the scriptures, and the theology of nature, when rightly understood; do not, or ought not, to harmonize with each other?

If this statement of the premises be either obscure or inaccurate, or any part or parts either not true, or not apposite to the enquiry; should the subject meet the disapprobation of any one, so as to merit his reply, I would entreat him either to correct the above, or to state the premises as, according to the best of his judgement, may free the subject from unnecessary embarrassment.

Whatever were the virtues of Voltaire, the veil of christian charity is silently drawn over them; his memory lives in his vices. But whatever were his personal vices as the hero of deism, or that ugly term infidelity; their traduction can answer no valuable purpose to the christian hero, except like a glass to reflect his own personal likeness.

"Vile is the vengeance on the ashes cold,

"And envy base that barks at sleeping dust."

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FINIS.